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'MÈRE ADELÉ'
AN ORIGINAL PORTRAIT
BY F. CARLYLE

MILLET'S MODEL BY N. PEACOCK

THE passing away of Adèle Marier was as simple and unostentatious as her life. In spite of the interest attached to this gentle being, so attractive by reason of her sweet serenity and the never-wearying patience with which she bore up against the constant hardships of a French peasant-woman's life, her death has remained unnoticed by the eager chroniclers of important and unimportant events.

It would have been a difficult matter four years ago, when I first visited Barbizon, to trace any resemblance between the bent old woman,

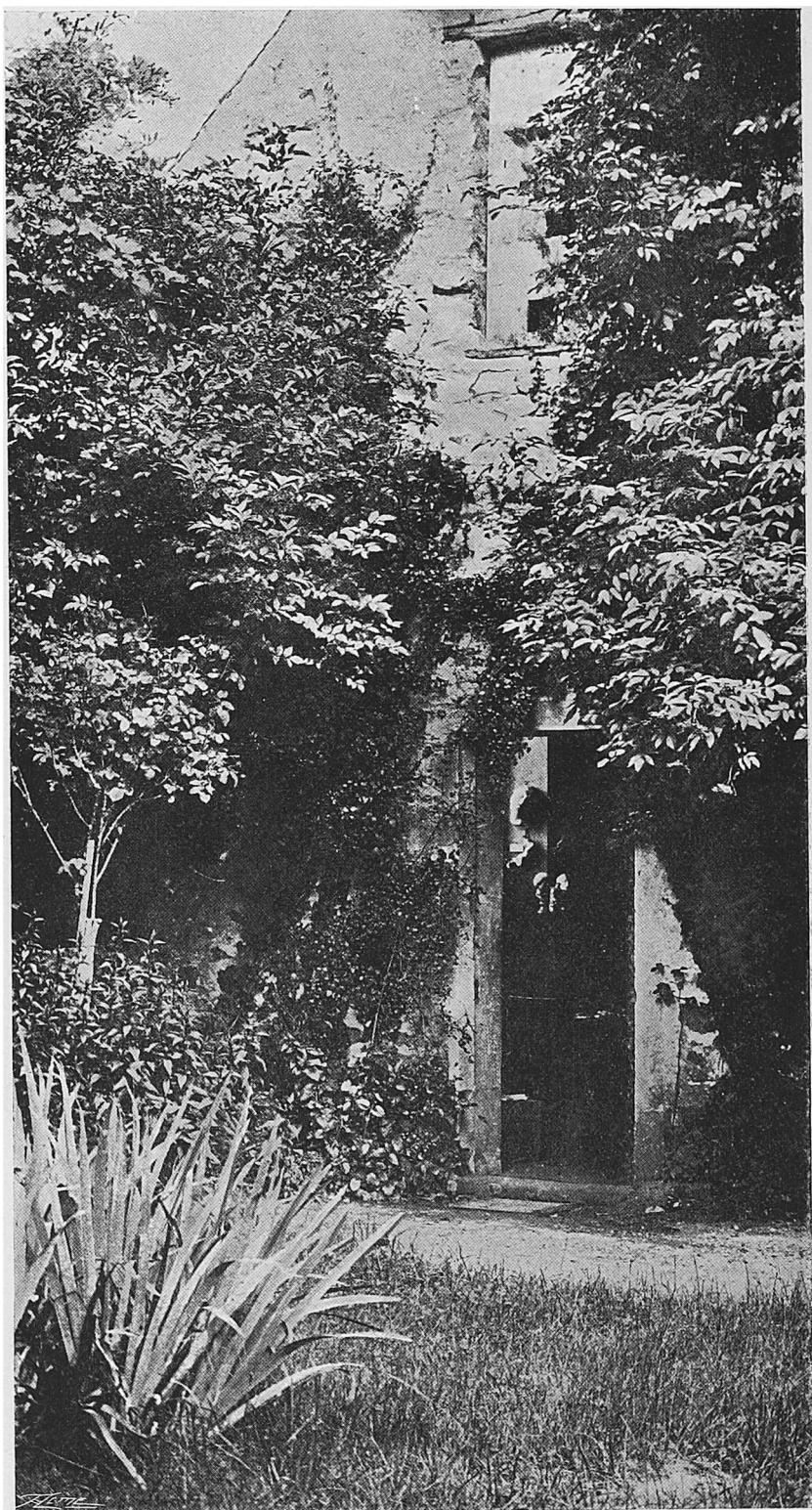
Adèle Marier — Mère Adèle, as she was familiarly called—and the graceful young peasant girl, Adèle Moschener, who has become famous throughout the artistic world as the model who posed for Millet in his best-known work, *The Angelus*, painted in 1859, when she was eighteen. Most effectually do the rude customs of French bucolic life leave their mark. These demand that the women of the family do the bulk of the hard work, so by the time they have reached their fiftieth year they are mere wrecks of former strength and beauty. Mère Adèle, in her fifty-fourth year, was only one of the many



ADELE MARIER'S COTTAGE.



MILLET'S VILLAGE—BARBIZON.
THE LANE ON THE LEFT LEADS
TO MILLET'S STUDIO
(FROM A PHOTOGRAPH)



*DOORWAY OF MILLET'S STUDIO
(FROM A PHOTOGRAPH)*

examples to be found ; all that remained of her former comeliness was the refined, sad face, like that of a Madonna in a well-worn, time-stained frame, while her whole being seemed to be impregnated with the same peculiarly devotional feeling seen in the form of the young peasant-girl in the picture.

Many and curious are the tales she had to tell of those bygone days when Millet, unknown, uncared for, and desperately poor, struggled bravely on in spite of taunts and sneers, declaring that as he saw and understood Nature so he would interpret her. Never would he compromise his art to pander to vulgar taste in order to possess the good things of this world.

Adèle Marier was born in Barbizon itself, and lived there all her life. Her mother dying when she was very young, Adèle was brought up by her grandfather, a Bohemian, who had settled in the small, unheard-of village, and started weaving as a means of gaining his livelihood. The house she inhabited and in which she died is the same long, low building where all the looms were kept. At that time the family lived in an old-fashioned thatched cottage in the court, which unfortunately about nine years ago it became necessary to pull down, the building being in an unsafe condition.

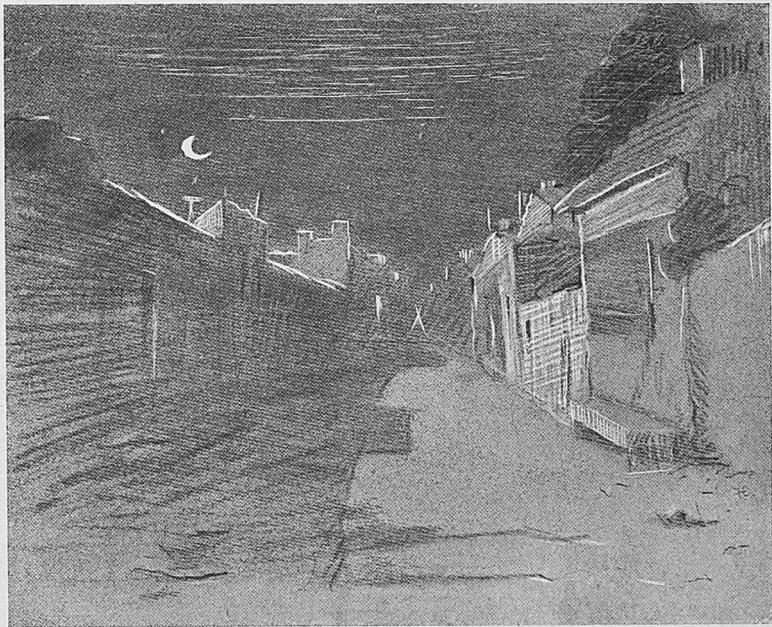
At seventeen years of age Adèle went to Millet's to look after the children and help the mistress of the house generally. It was doubtless her refined face and graceful appearance which appealed to the artist's sense of beauty, for from the time she first entered upon her lowly duties we constantly see her reappearing in his pictures.

To many who have but a slight knowledge of Millet's life and labour it has seemed strange that he did not decide to remain in Paris and work there, but the Parisian workman, although interesting enough as a study, represented to the poor artist a 'soul in revolt,' dissatisfied with everything, and over-eager for material benefits ; whereas the son of the soil, to whom the tilling of the ground is a sort of religious function, appeared as resignation itself. The solemnity, which is one of the peasant's chief characteristics, and which resumes within itself all the poetry we connect with him, proceeds from this unconscious attitude towards his daily occupation. Millet felt and understood the charm of peasant life and its surroundings in a way hitherto ignored, and

added to his sympathy and comprehension a technical dexterity capable of expressing all he wished by the simplest means. The *Angelus* was painted almost entirely from notes in Millet's studio at Barbizon, yet, strange to say, Mère Adèle had no recollection whatever of the man who posed with her. In reply to my question she said quaintly, '*C'était un homme*,' that was all she remembered. It seems a fitting subject for a melancholy train of reflections that the man whose attitude of prayer has gone forth to the world as the most beautiful monument of sweet, resigned toil, should be a mere waif and stray, quite forgotten by the woman at whose side he stood for many hours while the artist sought to carry out his touching inspiration, and between whom, according to the natural order of things, there were the makings of a very pretty idyll.

While this famous picture was developing under the master-hand, the indefatigable artist was also busy with a lesser-known work, *Death and the Woodman*, to his model's great terror, for it was her duty to attend to the studio fire, and after the evening meal she would creep cautiously to the door, catch sight of the skeleton hanging motionless in the centre of the room, and fly ignominiously. She often talked of that skeleton, and with bated breath, glancing furtively over her shoulder, would say, "Again and again I have let the fire go out, or bribed someone else to look after it for me."

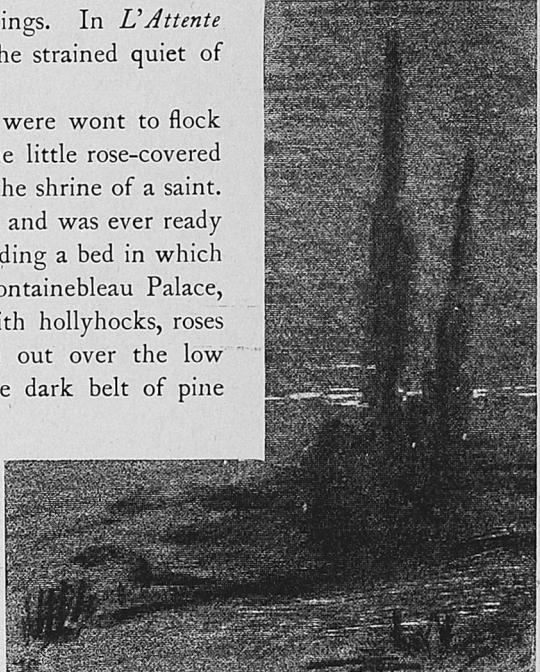
Mère Adèle told me that she considered *L'Attente* (for which she posed) the best of her master's paintings. She always spoke of it under its original title, *La Mère de Tobie*, but as Millet simply represented a peasant woman standing at her cottage door, screening her eyes with her hand, looking anxiously out into the distance, waiting—without any attempt at archæological detail—it has gradually lost its first name and is now generally known as *L'Attente*. Which ever title may be preferred, or whether the beholder see in the painting a biblical conception or the expression of a purely human idea, makes little or no difference to its value as a work of art. The picture is as full of feeling as the *Angelus*, though differing greatly from it. In the latter the religious sentiment is evoked by the sounding of the bell which announces to the workers in the fields the close of the day, cessation of labour, the sunset-hour when every true peasant offers



MILLET'S VILLAGE—BARBIZON
IN THE MOONLIGHT
DRAWN BY F. CARLYLE

up prayer and praise to the Giver of all good things. In *L'Attente* the feeling is that of the hush of expectancy, the strained quiet of the anxious watcher.

Tourist-pilgrims and admirers of the Master were wont to flock from far and wide to see Millet's model, and the little rose-covered cottage in which she dwelt was looked upon as the shrine of a saint. Mère Adèle took all this homage most modestly, and was ever ready to show visitors her beautiful old furniture (including a bed in which Louis XVI. slept), most of which came from Fontainebleau Palace, and her quaint, old-fashioned garden, stocked with hollyhocks, roses and purple phlox. Looking from the garden out over the low stretch of fields, you can see in the distance the dark belt of pine trees beyond which the two great artist-friends, Millet and Rousseau, lie side by side in their last long sleep. They have found a fitting resting-place out in the midst of their dearly-loved plains, o'ershadowed by the sombre, solemn pines, which, when the breeze creeps quietly over from the distant hills, murmur sweet and low to the men who struggled so bravely and were so misunderstood during their lifetime. In memory of the two artists a large bronze plaque, with splendidly modelled portraits of Millet and



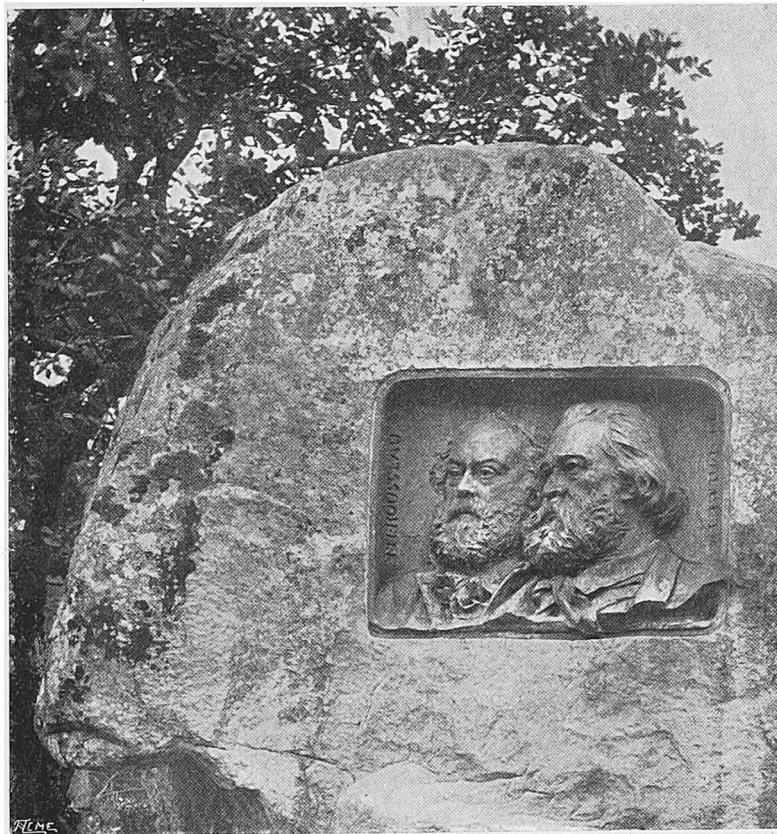
'IN MILLET'S COUNTRY'
A SKETCH BY F. CARLYLE

Rousseau (worked as a labour of love by the sculptor Chapu), has been set high on a rock near the entrance of the forest which stretches away from the foot of Barbizon's one street.

Adèle Marier's husband, Père Marier, is the type of the true, old-fashioned peasant—big, awkward, kind-hearted, quick-tempered, independent, and honest as the day. The difference between husband and wife was remarkable, for she was refinement itself, and he, with the best will in the world, is constantly blundering. Here we see a very decided instance of the fact that mixing with superior intellects, and living among artistic surroundings, gives a bloom to people of lower status which no amount of hard work or rougher contact can ever wholly obliterate. The question of environment undoubtedly played an important part in Mère Adèle's extreme refinement and courtesy of manner, as contrasted with the dear old boy's blunt and rough ways. Père Marier and his son

Charles work in the fields in the summer, and break stones or find odd jobs during the winter; the mother and her daughter Josephine took in washing as long as the Barbizon season lasted, and did a little sewing until the return of the summer months. When last I saw Mère Adèle she seemed to be fading fast, the patient old woman was tranquilly awaiting the ringing of her Angelus; she told me how long the nights seemed and how much she suffered through the darkness all alone, always ending up with the pitiful refrain: '*Je ne veux pas mourir seule!*'

Not only must the great Christian curfew, which at each sundown rings in sweet repose to the weary peasant, be inevitably associated in our minds with this pathetic personality, but the spirit of the Master can scarcely fail to hover over the memory of that form which has been to a whole generation—and will be to many more—the type and emblem of the words: '*Ecce Ancilla Domini*'—Behold the handmaid of the Lord.



MONUMENT TO MILLET AND
HIS FRIEND ROUSSEAU
BY CHAPU